



Nathan Riley Carpenter, Benjamin N. Lawrance, eds. *Africans in Exile: Mobility, Law, and Identity*. Framing the Global Series. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2018. Illustrations, maps. xvi + 337 pp. \$85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-253-03807-4.

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Nathan Riley Carpenter and Benjamin N. Lawrance's far-ranging, innovative edited collection engages with experiences and understandings of exile, focusing on "the breadth and complexity of exile and its deep and lasting impact on people across and beyond the African continent" (p. 3). Experiences of exile, they argue, have been viewed too often as one of two extremes, either as profoundly alienating or as deeply romantic. Exiles themselves have also been misunderstood. While the archetype of the exile is the exceptional, elite individual whose activities and existence challenge state power, *Africans in Exile* shows instead how ordinary Africans have come to experience exile as a result of their everyday interactions with the state. At the same time, the collection disrupts the popular notion that exile necessarily equals isolation and disconnection, demonstrating instead both how exile applies to communities and how exile can generate communities (p. 7). The central goal of *Africans in Exile*, which it achieves ably, is to "reconsider exile in its totality and to argue for its centrality to theorizations of state power in colonial and postcolonial Africa" (p. 4).

The sixteen chapters that make up *Africans in Exile* derive primarily from papers presented at

the 2015 Conable Conference in International Studies at the Rochester Institute of Technology, an interdisciplinary meeting organized around the topic of "exile and deportation in global perspective." [1] The chapters carry the reader across a broad expanse of time, space, and topic. Chapters on the politics of exile in colonial Africa, such as Trina Leah Hogg's careful examination of the deportation of political prisoners in nineteenth-century Sierra Leone and the "violent geography of exile" that ensued from colonial policy and practice, reveal "the critical role that colonial engagement with frontier communities had in constructing colonial law" (p. 56). Those chapters addressing the complicated relationship between exile and decolonization, for instance, Joanna Tague's lively study of the education of Mozambican refugees in exile in Dar es Salaam during Mozambique's civil war, challenge "the conflation of exile with punishment by framing exile as opportunity," showing how exile could provide the space and resources to prepare for a new kind of permanency (p. 138). And chapters on postcolonial varieties of exile, for example, Lawrance's sensitive treatment of the testimonies of Togolese asylum seekers' narratives of torture, point to the "internal dynamics of repression," which have rendered self-imposed exile

the only option for countless contemporary Africans (p. 288).

While the chapters thus address a remarkable diversity of people, places, and periods, they are nonetheless united by their interest in the political purposes of exile and in the centrality of exile to “any account of state power or critical rereading of colonial and postcolonial oppression” (p. 4). They also share a strong focus on how exile “was as much a state of mind as it was a physical situation” and lend careful attention to how exiled people have exerted agency within what is typically regarded to be a fundamentally disempowering experience (p. 7). Whether addressing Africans who experienced exile as a punitive measure—as something done *to* them—or those who experienced exile as a voluntary condition, the chapters show how people have been able to take ownership of their circumstances.

The organization of the chapters into three, roughly equal, methodologically oriented sections lends further cohesiveness to the collection overall. Part 1, “The Legal World of Exile,” brings together a series of chapters that explore the legalities, and *illegalities*, of exile (p. 15). Whether writing on colonial Sierra Leone, Kenya, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, or Benin, here the authors trace the legal genealogies of exile, questioning how “exile is a particular form of coercive power” and highlighting the ways “the historiography of colonial law and its application is deeply contested” (p. 16). Part 2, “Geographies of Exile,” takes on the roles of space and place in shaping the experience of exile. Examining nationalist and activist communities on the continent *and* those in European capitals, the authors show how while “political exile was a sentence, it also served as a form of resistance” (p. 20). But at the same time, these chapters illustrate how exile was not simply expressed in “political rhetoric” but productive of “affective states” that such political speech could not, or would not, capture (p. 18). Part 3, “Remembering and Performing Exile,” asks how exiled subjects experienced their

displacement. The chapters engage with the ways modalities of memory and expressive repertoires have shaped both the experience of exile and its retellings. They examine how exiled subjects “performed” (and remembered) the experience of displacement, either through artistic expressions, such as songs or poetry, or according to institutional or organizational demands. Overall, its rich array of subject matter organized by a clear thematic structure and a set of common questions makes *Africans in Exile* easily accessible as a whole, by section, or on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

Africans in Exile also makes a bold and useful methodological claim: the “diversity of exiles’ experiences across the continent can be recovered and interpreted as an ‘archive’” (p. 4). The diversity of sources and voices that make up this “archive of African exile,” Carpenter and Lawrance assert, “speaks to the lived experiences of persecution in an increasingly globalized mobile, migratory age” (p. 8). Recognizing that state archives often stop short of, or shortly after, independence, this formulation of exile-as-archive takes up the problem faced by many scholars of postcolonial Africa: how to push beyond state archives, “*the* archive,” both to conceptualize what counts as an “archive” more broadly and to locate fresh, rich sources through which to interrogate Africa’s past and present. *Africans in Exile* demonstrates that the “archive of exile emerges in the public sphere: in newspapers, in popular song and poetry, in television and online” (p. 12).

Overall, *Africans in Exile* provides an abundance of well-researched, engaging studies that complicate the notion of exile and push the boundaries of the archive in ways that will be particularly useful to scholars of colonial Africa aiming to problematize how “both law and violence were at the heart of colonial rule” and scholars of postcolonial Africa seeking to interrogate how “coerced displacement” has emerged as a “defining feature of the modern era” (pp. 18, 23).

Note

[1]. “A Vision of Revolution’: Exile and Deportation in Global Perspective,” 4th Conable Conference, Rochester Institute of Technology, <https://www.rit.edu/cla/conable/2015-conference> (accessed March 16, 2019).

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